

The Federal Flyer

Second Senate Briefing Held on SHARE Proposal House/Senate Leaders Continue Call for Original Co-Sponsors

On April 24, 21 staffers from the United States Senate attended a second Senate briefing on the proposed States' Highway Alliance for Real Equity (SHARE) legislation to improve the equity of the distributions of federal-aid highway program funds among the states. The two lead Senate sponsors, **Senator George Voinovich** (R-Ohio) and **Senator Carl Levin** (D-Michigan), expect to file their version of the bill in the next few weeks.

This second Senate briefing - led by Voinovich and Levin staffers and SHARE members Florida DOT and Indiana DOT - provided Senate staffers with an opportunity to learn more about how the SHARE proposal would benefit their states. The SHARE proposal would expand the reach of the Minimum Guarantee provision to cover all of the federal highway program funds distributed to the states (including all formula apportionments and discretionary allocations) and to ensure a minimum rate of return from those funds of 95% on each state's share of payments to the Highway Trust Fund. Those in attendance were urged to have the Senators they represent sign on as original co-sponsors of the SHARE legislation.

On the House side of Capitol Hill, the SHARE leaders provided a similar briefing for House staffers in March. **Majority Leader Tom DeLay** (R-Texas) and **Congressman Baron Hill** (D-Indiana) continue their call for original co-sponsors for their introduction of the SHARE legislation in the House, which is also anticipated in the near future.


Recent comments coalition members have heard about possible threats to the equity gains made in TEA 21 reinforce the importance of maintaining strong support for the SHARE principles. We have heard rumors that the reauthorization bill might not cover High Priority Projects under the Minimum Guarantee, a key victory for donor state equity in TEA 21. In addition, many members of Congress perceive SHARE's proposal to extend the Minimum Guarantee to discretionary programs as somehow limiting the prestige of appropriators in earmarking projects for their districts.

An example of Texas' strong support for improved donor state equity is the passage on April 9 of HCR 82 in the Texas House of Representatives. The resolution, sponsored by **Representative Scott Campbell** (R-San Angelo), asks Congress to increase each state's minimum rate of return from the Highway Trust Fund to 95% of the state's share of contributions. The Texas Senate will consider the resolution in May and then send it to the Congress in support of enhanced highway program equity in TEA 21 reauthorization.

For more information on the SHARE proposal, check out the SHARE website: www.sharestates.org.



Senate Leaders Introduce AIR 21 Reauthorization Bill 3-Year Measure Provides Steady Increases for Aviation Programs



Following on the heels of the Bush Administration's release of its proposal for the reauthorization of federal aviation programs (Flight-100), the bipartisan leadership of the **Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee** on April 8 introduced S. 824, the Aviation Investment Revitalization Vision (AIR-Vision), their 3-year proposal for AIR 21 reauthorization. AIR-Vision would fund the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) in FY 2004 at \$3.4 billion (its current level funding) and provide an annual increase of \$100 million through FY 2006. The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) facilities and equipment programs would receive a 3-year total of \$8.9 billion to upgrade the air traffic control system. The proposal also establishes a funding mechanism (via passenger security fees) to pay for security capital costs at airports and streamlines the process for approving and constructing airport capacity projects.

As a block grant state, the Texas Department of Transportation administers approximately \$26 million in annual federal AIP funds for improvements to the state's general aviation and reliever airports system. The FAA also provides funding directly to the large commercial airports in Texas for needed infrastructure.

Budget Deal Allows for Increased Transportation Spending Transportation Advocates Win Key Funding Battle for Reauthorization

On their way out the door on April 11 for the two-week spring recess, the House and Senate passed the FY 2004 Budget Resolution, providing \$231 billion for highway programs and \$49.1 billion for transit programs for TEA 21 reauthorization. That is 11 percent above the budget resolution that included only \$206 billion for highways and \$44 billion for transit. The conferees also agreed on a provision allowing transportation spending increases as long as they can be covered by extra trust fund revenues. In other words, if the transportation authorizers can raise the revenues for the Highway Trust Fund, they will be allowed to spend them without facing a budget point of order.

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Don Young (R-Alaska) and **ranking member James Oberstar** (D-Minnesota) plan to introduce their TEA 21 reauthorization proposal totaling \$375 billion over six years. Their challenge now is to find the additional resources to cover the bill's higher price tag.

The **Federal Flyer** is a publication of the TxDOT Legislative Affairs Office. It is intended to provide up-to-date information on major legislative activities in the 108th Congress for the management of the Texas Department of Transportation, state leaders, and others interested in Texas transportation issues. This report will also feature key activities in the national transportation community. Sources include news services and staff reports.

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